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Published on http://www.amphilsoc.org/library/valentinedarwin

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The **4800** volumes of the Valentine collection provide a stunning opportunity to explore the spread of Darwinian ideas through popular culture. The collection includes many books published in English in the decades 1870 to 1950. What a bonus for scholarship! These decades were the key time for the distribution and wide circulation of Darwinian theory in the United States and Europe—and also the key time for intense discussion about evolutionary ideas. As such, the collection represents a particularly fascinating moment in the history of science when the concepts of evolution by natural selection moved beyond the control of Darwin's immediate supporters—and of Darwin himself-- and became the property of popularisers, educators, and general readers. People with little formal engagement with science could now make up their own minds about the big philosophical questions of the day.

Of course earlier in the nineteenth century there had been intense debate associated with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, and continuing controversy when his book *The Descent of Man* was published in 1871 in which he wrote freely about the animal

ancestry of humankind. Right from the start, Darwin's books were energetically discussed by the general public. The Valentine collection holds multiple editions of Darwin's own writings and the other fundamental texts of the Darwinian revolution. What excites me, however, is that here we also have the next wave of publications, a fresh wave of books that took Darwinism out into the world, creating the second Darwinian revolution if you will, when ordinary people who had heard of the controversy began to have access to cheap, and often colourful, accounts of what were then thought to be all the significant aspects of the situation. Publishers of educational literature sensed a growing market. These books of the second wave document the moment that people were able to engage with evolution on their own terms, at prices they could afford. Historians value such moments very highly because it is usually difficult to get inside the popular sweep of a national movement. The Valentine collection is able to provide sources that can tell us a great deal about what people thought was significant and how far these ideas might have been distributed through the reading population.

One particular genre that is well represented in the Valentine collection is the compendium. Some of these books present selections of Darwin's writings edited down in size to provide manageable intellectual soundbites, and represent an assortment of "Darwin's greatest hits". Some are by authors intending to explain Darwinism to school children, some have attractive illustrated bindings and illustrations, and some are shortened accounts of Darwin's life, in which the voyage of the *Beagle* features very prominently. None of them are specialised and they all presume an audience eager to learn about science and the advancement of knowledge.

One of the earliest is a children's book published in 1879 called *What Mr Darwin Saw in his voyage round the world in the ship Beagle* (NY, Harper) that features an illustrated cover montage of African beasts, surely adapted from some other work. The preface is

addressed to parents and explains that the book's intention is to interest children in the study of natural history and geography. The text consists of anecdotes about animals, humankind, and nature drawn from Darwin's own words about the *Beagle* voyage, and is well illustrated by variety of artists.

For the historian, this book, and others like it, raise interesting reflections. Darwin is here being used as an exemplar of observational skill. Schoolteachers—and others—liked to use his life story to encourage their pupils to pay attention to the scientific method of observation. Yet in this book there is no mention of Darwin's controversial theories of evolution. Isn't this curious? Darwin was indeed a fine observer. But his main claim to fame in science was the use he made of his observations in support of the theory of evolution by natural selection. It seems to me that the objections to evolutionary theory were so intense and varied that many popular writers diverted their praise on to his natural history rather than face up to the implications for religious thought brought about by Darwin's claims.

In this way, younger readers might not even have known that Darwin was the bogey-man of nineteenth-century culture. *A Book of Natural History*, edited by David Starr Jordan in 1902 (vol 14 in the series Young Folks' Library, editor in chief Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Boston, Hall and Locke), engaged primarily with the wonders of nature and adventure stories to draw a moral lesson about science. Jordan was himself a famous biologist and noted Darwinian supporter. Here, extracts from Darwin's *Beagle* writings highlighted the value of a close observation of living beings, ranging from a description of the scissor beak bird, to spiders, sea slugs and cuttle-fish. Jordan thought that nature study was an excellent route for developing the personal self-reliance that he felt was necessary to be a good scientist. He stated that "The chief value of nature study . . . is that like life itself, it deals with realities. One must in life make his own observations, frame his own

inductions, and apply them in action as he goes along." Once again the theory of evolution was not mentioned, nor any of its implications. Darwin was presented as a super-skilled observer, the very model of a scientific man—but without any sense of what his major intellectual achievement had actually been.

The tradition of using Darwin as a moral example continues right through to the present day. Randall Gibbons in a 1995 book titled *In their own Words*, included extracts from Darwin's life as a "source of fascination and inspiration".

Other books address evolution directly. In 1884 *Darwinism stated by himself*, selected and arranged by Nathan Sheppard (NY, Appleton), presented "characteristic passages from the writings of Charles Darwin . . . designed especially for those who know little, or nothing, about his line of research and argument, and yet would like to obtain a general idea of it in a form which shall be at once authentic, brief, and inexpensive." The text included a short discussion of science and religion questions. Nathan Sheppard stated that Darwin's moral character was exemplary and that his science was completely in accord with religious doctrine, a line of argument that is found in many popular works, and reveals a strong wish on the part of the editor to make everything seem uncontroversial. Please note that there is no direct explanation of the secular, naturalistic framework of Darwin's work! Instead this editor took a conciliatory approach to science and religion. By emphasising Darwin's moral virtues and the wonders of the natural world that he described, Sheppard could steer clear of dangerous territory, and slide fairly easily into explaining evolution as the working out of God's plan for nature.

Something of the same tactic can be seen in a 1924 volume published in England of extracts from scientific writers, *Cambridge readings in the Literature of Science*, arranged by WCD Whetham and his daughter MD Whetham (Cambridge University Press, 1924).

This was intended to provide a concise account of the main advances in science. Published in the year before the Scopes "Monkey" trial convulsed the USA, the frontispiece of this entirely scientific volume reproduced Michelangelo's Sistine chapel fresco of the creation of the sun, moon, and stars.

A different approach was taken by early collections and compendia. For example in John Erskine's *Outline of Great Books* (NY, Hammerton, 1887), edited by J A Wise, the contents are divided into History, Philology, Science, Religion, Poetry, Biography, Travel, and Miscellaneous. The encyclopedic intent is evident, right down to the double-columned layout. Darwin appears twice in the Science category: once in passages extracted from the voyage of the *Beagle*; and once in passages from the *Origin of Species*. The editors presented science as a succession of major achievers, just as they did for poetry and art. They included extracts from Haeckel, Spencer, Humboldt, Herschel, Bateson Freud, Einstein, Davy, and William Harvey. The writing style stressed that the acquisition of knowledge was an enjoyable exercise: "Get yourself a comfortable chair and good light—and have confidence in your own mind" exhorted the introduction." The desired readership was busy men and women "deficient in book knowledge" who needed a short cut to learning.

The Valentine collection is rich in these compendia that present summaries and extracts from the world's greatest books. For example, *The International Library of Famous Literature*, was a major twenty-volume undertaking published in Boston in 1898. A team of editors chose selections from the world's great writers and provided biographical and explanatory notes. A passage from Darwin's *Descent of Man* turns up in volume 13, which was devoted to writings about the human condition and human origins. The Darwin passage is placed between William Morris's poem about paradise, *Golden Apples*, and Shakespeare's poem, *The Seven Ages of Man*. The intention was clearly to provoke

reflection on humanity and our place in the natural world: do we have some purpose to fulfil on earth and how do we fit into the natural cycle of birth and death?

Something similar takes place in *The World's Great Masterpieces*, edited by Harry Thurston Peck, with an introduction by John Russell Young, the Librarian of Congress (NY, American Literary Society, 1899). This too was an ambitious turn-of-the-century production. The volumes aimed to cover history, biography, science, philosophy, poetry, drama, travel, adventure, and fiction. It was arranged both chronologically and alphabetically, implying that the reader was expected more or less to know who he or she was looking for, and to dip in and out. It was perhaps not intended to be read as a narrative. Darwin appears in the nineteenth century volume between Agnes Mary Darmesteter, an English author and poet, and Alphonse Daudet, the French novelist. The material replicated was Darwin's comparison of mental powers between mankind and the lower animals (apes), extracted from his *Descent of Man*.

During the interwar period, many readers in the English-speaking world thirsted for serious knowledge. The Valentine collection shows how versions of Darwin's writings shifted during the 1920s away from the early, somewhat attenuated format toward more red-meat affairs. The *Descent of Man*, published in New York by the Vanguard Press, was intended as a summary for those who had read the long original, as well as serving as an introductory book for "those who are beginning the study of evolutionary science." It was published in a series that brought significant political and scientific works to a new reading public, 'The Vanguard of Thought for the Vanguard of Humanity.' This aim meshed well with more well known titles of the same period, such as *What Darwin really said* with an introduction by Julian Huxley 1929, a cheap, sixpenny, tract in the series 'Routledge Introductions to Modern Knowledge.' This worthy series included texts on history, economics, domestic economics, the new woman, and famous Americans.

Huxley edited another title in similar mode, *The Living Thoughts of Darwin*, as one of a series including works by Schopenhauer, Montaigne, Tolstoy, Pascal, Marx, and Paine. These series have clear social and political aims and would well repay closer study.

Around this time too, cheap editions of Darwin's 'Autobiography' began to become available. This autobiography was always reproduced from Francis Darwin's edition of Charles Darwin's *Life and Letters* (London 1887), in which it was originally included in a carefully edited form. Its appeal to the new generation of egalitarian thinkers in the English-speaking world was perhaps because of Darwin's statement that he abandoned conventional Christianity around the time that his *Origin of Species* was published. Whereas earlier accounts of Darwin's life placed great emphasis on his respect for religion and lifelong sense of the sublime, these 1920s and 1930s versions (which were based on exactly the same text, unaltered from the Francis Darwin original) evidently included Darwin among the secular moderns. A 1929 copy of Darwin's *Autobiography* is in the Valentine collection, published in the Thinkers' Library by F D Watts & Co. The book has a copy of Rodin's *Thinker* on the cover and other authors in the series included H.G. Wells, Herbert Spencer, Haeckel, and John Stuart Mill. The Watts publishing company specialised in avant-guard texts, especially biological futurism, including eugenics.

Futurism and self-education were also messages in later compendia. *A Treasury of Science* (NY Harper 1943), edited by the famous physicist Harlow Shapley, invited readers to share in the " Conquests of science". Shapley imagined accompanying his authors on their intellectual adventures, including Darwin on the Galapágos Islands. He used his introduction to indicate the majesty of scientific investigation and a vision of international cooperation. This, it must be said, was surely part of the American Cold War effort to improve scientific education. The chosen authors, said Shapley, "transmit the message that all races of mankind are curious about the universe, and that, when free and not too

depressed by hunger, men instinctively question and explore, analyze and catalogue. They have done, in all ages, in all civilized countries. They work single, in groups, and increasingly in world-wide organizations. Science recognizes no impossible national boundaries, and only temporary barriers of language. It points the way to international cooperation."

Finally, as is well known, through the early years of the twentieth century Darwinism became an integral part of British colonial thought. This trend can be clearly seen in popular literature, such as in the Valentine copy of *Tales of travel and Discovery* (Modern English Series, London John Murray, 1926). The book included extracts from Darwin's *Beagle* voyage. Yet there was unsubtle national purpose too. The preface mentions that the British were pioneers of exploration "because our men have always been wanderers and explorers," and have consequently reaped a greater advantage than any other nation in the process.

What do we have here for historians? The collection is a wonderful resource for research into popular scientific opinion. It won't tell you everything about Darwinism. But it will provide a wealth of intriguing and worthwhile sources that open questions of major importance relating to the shifts in cultural opinion from the 1880s through to the 1950s, fluctuations in the tone of voice used by educators, and variability in the political aims and possible uses of Darwin's texts to represent fresh points of view. I spent a few days with the Valentine collection and came away with a host of new ideas to explore. I hope you do too.